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THE SINGING TEACHER

By LOUISE OLIVER.

Just for a few minutes Viola felt like running away when she faced her grown-up school. How different from the little girls and boys of daylight! To her surprise, quite a number of the men were foreigners who knew very little of the English language. But their wholesome respect for her put metal into her purpose and fighting blood into her veins.

There was one man in the room who puzzled Viola. He went by the name of Joe Brown. One thing she divined instantly—he was a gentleman; in fact, he had the manners of an aristocrat. But the thing that drew her to him from the first was his wonderful voice. For Viola insisted upon having singing. For fifteen minutes every evening the halls of the old building reverberated with the echoes of masculine voices.

And Joe Brown led them all. His voice was clear and deep and full of passionate appeal that gripped the heart of the little teacher.

One evening she called him to her. "Joe, I know you are not an American. Won't you sing a song for us in your own language? You have a wonderful voice."

Joe flushed happily and bowed low. "With the most pleasure, Miss Northcott." He spoke slowly, picking his words with care, but he seldom made a grammatical error and was fast overcoming his foreign accent. "I am German."

Joe Brown sang and it was so wonderful—the mellowness and richness of his voice, the feeling with which he sang, and as Viola's quick ear noted, the wonderful training he showed—that for some time after he had finished no one stirred.

Behind the tears in his pretty eyes was a look of interest that had never been there before.

The school did famously. Viola worked hard with her class and daily lessons became less irksome and more interesting. Then there was an innovation to which the pupils looked forward eagerly, for every evening they sang for them.

One night after the class was dismissed, Viola opened the street door to go home. Suddenly a gust of wind blew the sheet into her face and she tried to lift her off her feet. Then a man stepped out of the shadow.

"May I go home with you, Miss Northcott? It is a bad night."

Viola laid a hand gratefully upon his proffered arm. "Yes, indeed, Joe. I was good of you to wait."

After that there was little chance for them to talk. The storm increased in violence, and, even with her expert help, it was all she could do to keep her feet. When at last they reached her door she insisted upon him going in. "You must come in and wait, Joe. No one can live in that blizzard. I'm going to call mother to hear you sing. You don't mind, do you? I will play your accompaniment."

So Joe stayed and sang so wonderfully that both Viola and her mother were thrilled.

Then Viola told him of her own ambition—how she had stopped her musical education for lack of money to go further, and her determination to work day and night until she had enough money to have lessons of the wonderful Max von Deerhof.

"Max von Deerhof?" he cried.

"Yes! Do you know him?"

"Very, very well, Miss Northcott. I was thinking how happy he would be to have you for a pupil."

"I wonder," he went on, turning to her mother, "if I may give Miss Northcott some lessons on Saturday if she can spare me a little time. I teach music myself."

So Viola's Saturday lessons began, and she soon discovered that her teacher was a marvel. Under his guidance her voice expanded and became exquisitely beautiful. The cold weeks flew and April came. The days of high school were numbered.

The last night it was raining, a drenching April shower. When Viola appeared in the doorway Joe was waiting to take her home.

"Miss Northcott," he began almost immediately when he had suited his step to hers, "you aren't my teacher any longer, but with your consent I'll remain yours. It's time, too, that I was telling you my right name. I am Max von Deerhof, or do you know it already?"

Viola was silent, too amazed for speech.

He went on. "I know what you are thinking, wondering rather. Well, I will tell you. I could not learn English well. I had teachers by the dozen. No good! Then someone said: 'Do like the others. Go to a good night school. They will make you learn!' So I made my name into Joe Brown, and Joe Brown is so grateful to his teacher he is going to keep on giving his lessons forever if he may."

"I hardly know what to say, Mr. Von Deerhof," faltered Viola. "You have done something for me I can never repay."

"Maybe some day you'll find that you can," he said softly. "I love you, Viola. I have always loved you. And perhaps you may find some time that you could care a little for me!"

And there was a slight pressure from the fingers that rested so lightly upon his arm.

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